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AUTHOR Smith, Arthur L.
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ABSTRACT

This paper is a presentation of what a mass movement pressupposes rhetorically, as opposed to what a movement is in social or historical terms. The author outlines the functions of rhetoric in a movement, in order to establish how the metaphor operates as the essential rhetorical instrument. He states that a mass social or historical movement is essentially a rhetorical campaign, because: (1) a collection of humans interact in order to verbalize their aims, creating the movement; (2) through rhetoric, symbols and metaphors are created, which characterize the ideological direction of a movement; and (3) a movement is the sum total of its adherent's communications activities, internal and external. The author claims that those who would study mass movements must isolate and identify the metaphors: the principal metaphor, which constitutes the basis of the movement, and the minor metaphors, the traditional ones, which are used in production of arguments, attacks, appeals, etc. The two categories together represent the totality of a rhetorical movement. (Author/RN)

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HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT:

A SEARCH FOR BOUNDARIES

by

Arthur L. Smith

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HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: A SEARCH FOR BOUNDARIES

Anyone who attends to the nature of rhetoric in mass movements and endeavors to understand the scholarship surrounding the subject sooner or later recognizes that it is an area of great confusion. The problem stems not so much from movements themselves but from our interpretations of them. This is not to say that we have not had clear and concise statements about movements. Certainly Leland Griffin's seminal essay and Herbert Simon's more recent discussions of a leader-centered theory have explicated certain dimensions of the topic.[1] They have generated debate and discussion and must be credited with reviving scholarly interest in movements among communicationists.

However, the conciseness of these essays within their own spheres, that is in doing what they set out to do, has not helped us (by us, I mean communicationists) to understand the rhetorical nature of mass movements. In what they have attempted to do they have been good; but they have not added significantly to our knowledge of the transfer of messages within the contexts of mass movements.

What is intended in this paper is a presentation of what a movement presupposes rhetorically as opposed to what a movement is socially or historically. While the interrelatedness of these dimensions is accepted it is emphasis which determines the relevance of a discussion of movements to rhetorical or communication theory. Thus it is a purpose of this paper to also outline the functions of rhetoric in a movement and, by so doing, to establish how the metaphor operates as the essential rhetorical instrument in constricting a movement.

I

In Herbert Simons' penetrating article he allowed that a "social movement was an uninstitutionalized collectivity that mobilizes for action to implement a program for reconstitution of social norms and values."[2] Already we have one if not two sources of our difficulty. To discuss a social movement or an historical movement is to indicate an emphasis which does not preclude but seriously impairs our rhetorical vision. A mass movement is itself a river of communication with diverse tributaries, heading in the same direction. It is therefore no particular "uninstitutionalized collectivity" as Simons and the sociologists would have it; it is in fact institutionalized by the peculiar metaphor it appropriates; thus a movement is rhetorical in some of its most conspicuous characteristics. It is elementary that movements are never formed without rhetoric; all grievances, frustrations, and reformist or revolutionary aims must be communicated in order to create the specific social collective which supposedly will sustain the ideological directions. The problem then with a sociologically based theory is its emphasis on the mobilization of a collective to implement a program for reconstituting social norms and values without recognizing that it is communication alone that determines mobilization and reconstitution. There is no reason to seek elsewhere for an arching view of mass movements; rhetoric isolates and collectivizes and establishes itself as the essence of a movement.

II

Similarly one can argue that Griffin's principal contribution, one scheme outlining aggressor-defendant rhetoricians, also takes

us away from the core of a movement. It is as if we are cartographers placing rivers, lakes and countries in the proper perspective on the map so that we can have a beautiful arrangement. Griffin arranges for us; he presents a workable model for looking at an historical movement. When he suggests that there are three stages to a movement: (1) dissatisfaction; (2) desire for change; and (3) success or failure, he is anticipating Simons' sociological emphasis.[3] Thus Griffin's period of inception, period of rhetorical crisis, and period of consummation must be considered as sociological constructs. A mass movement is a rhetorical movement. It does not follow, however, that a rhetorical movement is a mass movement. This is so because a rhetorical movement is a trend, a tendency in the use of communication which may be underscored by the prevalence of a certain metaphor, whereas a mass movement suggests not just language tendencies but mobilization and reconstitution. Our study, however, as communicationists of the mass movement must not emphasize mobilization as the essence, but as the results of rhetoric. Malcolm Sillars was correct when he contended that Griffin did little except to establish sociological grounds for the mass movement. But if we are to explain the place of rhetoric we must not think as Sillars does that sociological grounds are the first premises of a movement.[4] Shannon and Weaver are correct to note that communication involves all human behavior.[5] Communication plays a key role from the early frustration to the movement's dissolution.

III

While a movement is dependent upon a collective of people, the collective achieves focus as a movement phenomenon because of

rhetoric. Any collective of people will not produce a movement; rhetoric is the vehicle upon which all aims and purposes ride. Basically there are three generalizations which should be understood in connection with communication and movements.

Generalizations

1. A movement presupposes that a collective of human beings have entered into a dynamic fraternity with each other to verbalize their aims. The movement is not the people apart from their rhetoric.

2. A movement presupposes the creation and production, through rhetoric, of symbols and metaphors which characterize its ideological direction.

3. A movement is the sum total of the adherents' communicative activity, internal and external.

So to speak of a mass movement is to speak of a rhetorical campaign. Whatever else the collective of human beings becomes, as a movement it is a verbal endeavor and the dynamic fraternity is perfected by the vigor of the rhetoric. In the second instance the symbolic manifestations of the collective are created, produced, called into existence by the spoken word. But the significance of this productivity is the overarching symbol that organizes, sustains and produces ~~one~~ the movement. Finally, as the sum total of all verbal activity carried on by the votarists the movement is a tension between defense and offense. Because the adequacy of transfer of messages within the collectivity determines in part how effective the external rhetoric will be, there is a constant search for equilibrium. Those movements that have a happy balance of internal talk and discussion with their external thrusts get the most for their time. Clearly, then, movements achieve their internal or external aim in a rhetorical fashion. In its internal use it is more often a periodic restatement of

the acceptable metaphors for group cohesion; this aspect of the movement represents the ritual of movement rhetoric. On the other hand, rhetoric directed toward the outside seeks to establish external relationships and in so doing, to catch the sociologists, argues for new values and norms. The contention itself is a rhetorical process.

We are now ready to look at the specific functions of rhetoric in mass movements.

1. The organizing function
2. The sustaining function
3. The productive function

In its organizing function rhetoric coordinates and structures the various elements of personal and collective grievance into a fairly consistent doctrine. Rhetoric, or more particularly the principal metaphor, may itself be the doctrine or a part of it. The sustaining influence comes through because it tries to conserve the fundamental union and solidarity of the votarists. The productive function creates the mood and the necessary atmosphere for an attack on the opposition. At this stage the spokesperson has already used and is continuing to use vilification, objectification, mythication and legitimation,[6] the essential verbal strategies of the agitator.

IV

By referring to mass movements as either social or historical the communicationist indicates his social science or historical interest. However, to speak of a rhetorical movement and to employ the communicationist's analysis of the transfer of messages to a mass movement is to arrive at a new perspective. For if rhetoric gives rise to the various other dimensions of a movement,

if it functions to coordinate, sustain, and produce the thrust of a movement, it is essential to a movement. Rhetoric becomes a productive structuring art. Furthermore, if rhetoric constitutes, as it does, the essence of a movement it is meaningful as an understanding of human behavior to identify, analyze and study movements by their rhetorical indicators. Movements differ not merely in the origin of their grievances or the composition of their votarists but principally in their rhetorical manifestations.

Two separate mass movements in the lengthy and lengthening black protest campaign illustrate the place of rhetoric as a marker of movements.[7] What was essentially different between the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King and the back-to-Africa movement led by Marcus Garvey thirty years before was the rhetorical symbolism. Little was changed in terms of choices, fundamental opposition, followers, and socio-economic positions of blacks relative to whites. Rhetoric as the producing art defined the metaphors that guided the movements, in fact, the metaphors were the rhetoric. This point is further advertised by the fact that Garvey and King were both close enough to the traditional prototype of the black orator to attract large crowds, both understood certain basic organizational principles, both possessed a keen sense of black history, both had a core of ardent followers, both appealed to the middling classes, and both led movements that lasted for nearly a decade. But studying sociology or history alone provides no explication of the external and internal messages generated by the movement. Not even a combination of these disciplines can adequately describe the nature of the communication inherent in the movement phenomenon.

Metaphors are the primary rhetorical indicators of a movement. A specific metaphor indicates the movement's treatment of its opposition, definition of the issues and summary statement of its aspirations. Two kinds of metaphors are recognized in mass movements (1) the traditional which I call the minor and (2) the principal metaphor. The latter constitutes the fundament of the movement. It is the verbal emblem, the identifying badge. Reification is the primary basis for treating abstractions as though they were things. Thus the principal metaphor is dependent upon reification for its translation as a political or ideological symbol. For example, to the back-to-Africa movement the expression "Africa beckons her children to come home" is procedurally, as far as the metaphorical content is concerned, a form of reification where Africa becomes first an abstraction in the minds of the followers and then the substance of their longings. Such a process may be elaborated upon by bringing in many minor metaphors such as "the arms of Africa", "the heart of Africa" or "the ebony legs of Africa." But even so, the principal metaphor in this case "Africa" sustains the movement. This explains in part how metaphors can be isolated in order to establish separateness from the opposition. Clearly, then, we are apt to learn much by attending to the metaphors of a movement, the symbols which say much more than they seem to say on the surface to votarists and opponents alike.

V

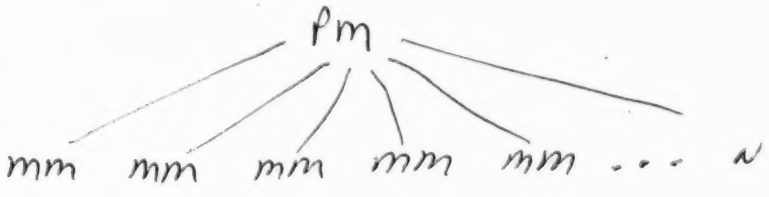
A system of analysis based upon explication of the principal metaphors and the relationship of the minor metaphors will establish the dimensions of a single movement and be useful in comparing and

contrasting movements. What this entails is an identification of the principal metaphor, either by content analysis or some form of factor analysis using movement adherents. Once the principal metaphor is established, that is, identified in every instance of usage in speeches by the spokesperson, the researcher proceeds to isolate the minor metaphors which constitute the laboring force, the mules of rhetoric. These metaphors are used in the production of argument, attacks on the opposition, mythication appeals and sanctions, and the meting out of justice to the wayward followers. In essence, these two categories of metaphors represent the totality of a rhetorical movement. To be capable of arousing emotions, a substantive part of the rhetorical process, a movement must possess dynamic metaphors, by which is meant those metaphors with emotional potential.

Only after a researcher has isolated the principal and minor metaphors can he begin to make sense out of the historical and sociological aspects of a movement; otherwise he may never understand how a movement achieves its objective. By isolating the metaphors the researcher can know what symbols are employed and can refer to the social and historical contexts for clarification of the symbols' purposes and values, historically and contemporarily.

For example, in Karen Borden's study of the movement for Philippine Independence she found that the principal metaphor was white superiority whether the congressional speakers favored or opposed independence. It is her argument that whether the minor metaphors had to do with paternalism, the yellow peril, our military bastion, or economics, they were tightly tied to the coattails of white superiority.[8] Similarly, Melbourne Cummings demonstrated

that Bishop Henry McNeal Turner of the African Methodist Episcopal Church sustained a back-to-Africa movement in the 19th century largely on the use of Africa as metaphor.[9] The term "Africa" represented for him fertile lands, justice, peace, religion, and civilization. The failure of Turner's movement to gain wide popular support among blacks, such as was to be achieved by Marcus Garvey, could be laid on the lack of currency of his metaphor for the black masses at that time in history. His campaign did, however, prepare the groundwork for Garvey's success. Garvey was also imaginative enough to employ minor metaphors which supported his principal metaphor. Neither Turner nor his associates appear to have possessed the necessary creativity to support their symbol. No movement can be successful without creative minor metaphors which strengthen the principal metaphor, and may be translatable into concrete artifacts to be seen, felt, and experienced. Garvey created marching bands, flags, a black cross corp, an African legion, a Black Star Shipping Company, etc., in order to put a handle on the principal metaphor. It is a dictatorial system with one principal and many minor metaphors. In such a system the minor metaphors intrigue the audience, to whet their appetite, so to speak, and in all of this, to enhance the principal metaphor. Diagramatically it may be represented as:



Adherence to any of the minor metaphors suggests indirect support for the principal metaphor, the movement's central driving force. Furthermore the minor metaphors share a connectedness as a part of the thematic construction. When movement speakers are able to secure acceptance of the minor metaphors much of their persuasive work is done. So even in doing this, that is, in accomplishing the acceptance of minor metaphors the leader or spokesperson is dependent upon the transfer of messages. Acceptance and adherence to an idea presupposes the presenting of that idea. It is precisely this dimension that is lacked in the previous works on mass movements. And while it is possible to examine a movement from the viewpoint of a leader and his dilemmas, it is crucial to a full rhetorical investigation to see what kinds of metaphors are employed to fire the movement's ideological engines. In other words, a sociological based theory is adequate neither as a description nor presentation of the rhetorical dimension of a mass movement. What is argued, then, is a message centered theory of mass movements, not to replace historical or social theories which are useful for contextual and mechanistic considerations; a message centered theory affirms the communication phenomenon and explains the use of principal metaphors. It should be clear by now that the narrower sense of metaphor, a shifting or displacement of verbal artifacts, is only slightly intended in this discussion. The principal metaphor is an interchange in a larger sense between what I. A. Richards called the tenor and vehicle, that is, the embellishment and the original idea, the shadow and the substance. In the back-to-Africa movement, the physical continent represented the tenor, the accent, the shadow, the embellishment, and its reified existence in the minds of

blacks the vehicle, the substance, the essence. Justice, fertility, equality, and peace constituted thematic appeals which created "Africa" as overarching symbol. Metaphors are integral to any sustained verbal campaign, their place in mass movements must be studied as the source of a movement's dynamic fraternity.

VI

In conclusion, a search for boundaries is only frustrating when we have no clear markers; such is not the case in the relationship between rhetoric and mass movements. Of course we have often paid little attention to the varieties of verbal projections standing squarely before us in our furious haste to get lost in sociology and history. This essay is not a beginning; it is a continuation of those studies that have placed the message, in all of its dimensions, at the center of rhetorical study. It is, however, an attempt to revive interest in the metaphor as an essential rhetorical instrument whose place and function in mass movements is critical to a full understanding. There can be little doubt that the boundaries of our study are close in to the nature and use of principal and minor metaphors.

Arthur L. Smith
University of California,
Los Angeles

FOOTNOTES

[1]Leland Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," Quarterly Journal of Speech, Volume XXXVIII, April, 1952; and Herbert Simons, "A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements," Quarterly Journal of Speech, Volume LVI, February 1970.

[2]Simons, p. 3.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Malcolm Sillars, "Rhetoric as Act," Quarterly Journal of Speech, Volume 50, October 1964, p. 281.

[5]C. E. Shannon and W. Weaver, The Mathematical Theory of Communication: Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949, p. 95.

[6]Arthur L. Smith, Rhetoric of Black Revolution, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1969.

[7]See Edmund Cronon, Black Moses, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, for an account of Marcus Garvey's career. There are numerous accounts of King's career.

[8]Karen Borden,"The Rhetoric of the Philippine Independence Movement," (University of California, 1972), unpublished dissertation.

[9]Melbourne Cummings, "The Rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, Leading Advocate in the African Emigration Movement, 1866-1907," (University of California, 1972), unpublished dissertation.